

DEPARTMENT OF BACTERIOLOGY AND IMMUNOLOGY
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
25 SHATTUCK STREET
BOSTON 15, MASSACHUSETTS

December 30, 1957

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Department of Medical Genetics
Genetics Building
The University of Wisconsin
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Joshua:

Thank you very much for your helpful comments on Boris. I could not find any ready way of modifying the criticisms I had made on his manuscript, but I tried to soften the blow by sending an encouraging covering letter. A copy is enclosed. I do hope these criticisms do not discourage him from rewriting the paper, or from feeling comfortable about the prospect of coming to this laboratory. I suppose there might be more tactful ways of handling this, but I find that the problem of analyzing a manuscript is much like working out a crossword puzzle. I may add that I am finding editorial work for the J.Bact. quite a burden, since I don't see how it can be useful to recommend modification of a paper unless the recommendations are made quite specific and detailed. *v.s.p., in terms of objectivity.*

I was interested by your comments on Chargaff's paper. He didn't tell me what he wanted the mutant for, and I could certainly have given him plenty of more stable ones. I was certainly amazed that he was willing to attach such significance to really modest increases above background mutation rates. Incidentally, I have had a graduate student trying to do transformations this fall in E. coli DAP-less protoplasts. It has been my thought that the wall rather than the membrane might be what determines whether DNA can enter a cell, and one should systematically test all possible ways of modifying the wall. After training herself to get transformation with pneumococcus she has now tried a couple of times to transfer streptomycin resistance in E. coli, but without success. I suppose someone ought to try to duplicate Chargaff's findings with more stable markers, and publish even negative results, but I don't think that would be any fun.

I am very disappointed that you won't be able to come here to give a Mueller Memorial Lecture this spring, but I can readily understand your reasons. I would therefore like to ask you whether you would be able to come here next fall. Indeed, there would be some advantage in having these annual lectures take place, so far as possible, while the medical students are taking Bacteriology. If we arranged the course next year in the same general order as this year, which will probably be the case, the students will have had Bacterial Genetics by the middle of October.

We were excited to learn from Al Coons about the results of your recent experiments with antibody formation by single cells. It sounds to me as though you've hit the jackpot again!

With best wishes for the coming year,

Sincerely,
Bernie
Bernard D. Davis